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SOME
ASSISTANCE
OFFERED TO
PARENTS
WITH RESPECT TO THE
RELIGIOUS EDUCATION
OF THEIR
CHILDREN,
IN A
DISCOURSE

From Prov. XXII. 6.

By BENJAMIN DAWSON, L. L. D.

The SECOND EDITION.

L O N D O N:

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P A R T S

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION



D I S C O U R S E

BY WILLIAM LUTHER PEARSON

IN TWO VOLUMES

LONDON

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MDCCCX.



A D V E R T I S E M E N T.

TH E author of the following pages makes not the common apology for their appearance in public, viz. “that they were drawn from him by the irresistible importunity of an affectionate people.” And indeed, as he looks upon such an apology as intended only to make the people answerable for the author’s reputation, so he owns, that this is by no means an extorted but his own voluntary publication. If it meet with a favourable reception, though but from a few serious and well-disposed Christians, it will answer his expectation. If it should not, he will be sorry for it, and blame none but himself. He is sensible that a performance of this nature can recommend itself to a few only. For who but parents will think themselves concerned to peruse it? And out of this number how many can be expect, in this age of extreme politeness, delicacy of taste, and refined judgment, will give themselves the trouble, on seeing so plain a title and so beaten a text, to turn over the first leaf? The shortness of it, however, may tempt some even to read it throughout: And as a few Hints may be more acceptable, on such a subject, than a large and laboured Treatise, so he flatters himself, that in this short compass of a sermon, he has given such as will be thought unexceptionably scriptural, of great importance, and sufficiently comprehensive,



TO MRS. DAWSON

OF

MANCHESTER,

Relict of the REVEREND

MR. ELY DAWSON.

HONOURED MADAM,



IN dedicating this small performance to
You, I break through the general
custom of Authors, who seem to think
none worthy to patronize their works,
but those that are distinguished by Birth, Title or
Fortune

DEDICATION.

Fortune. Their reason for this they generally acknowledge to be some particular favours received, for which they consider a Dedication, as a kind of genteel receipt. Allow me, MADAM, the same privilege, and to present You with this, as a testimony of filial gratitude for a liberal and pious Education, a favour, for which as I shall be ever thankful, so I esteem it greater than any which the most conspicuous for Birth, Title or Fortune are able to bestow upon Me.

Permit me also, MADAM, to beg Your Patronage of these few pages; since, as narrow as your Sphere may seem, if a work of this nature gain your approbation, I am certain it will, on that account, find an easy access into many worthy families. For they are not a few to whom Your affectionate and judicious endeavours in training up a numerous family in the principles of religion, are well known, and to whom Your exemplary piety, prudence, and virtue have rendered You long respectable. That a life so valuable
may

DEDICATION.

may be continued for many years, that the wisdom and virtue of your children may do honour to your instructions, and that your grey hairs may at last descend, with peace and comfort into the grave, is the most ardent prayer, and shall be the constant endeavour of,

MADAM,

Your ever dutiful

and affectionate Son

B. DAWSON.

DEDICATION

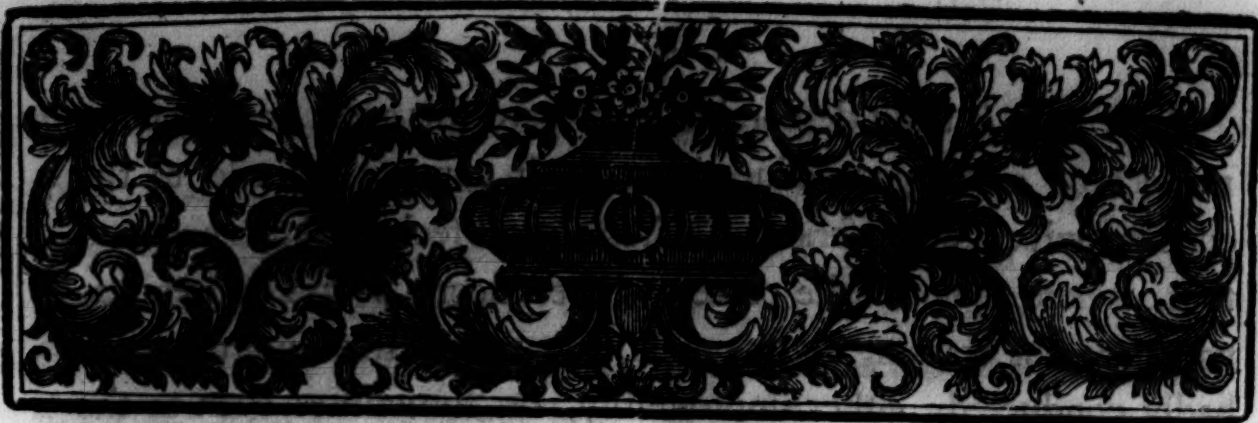
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PROV. xxii. 6.

Train up a child in the way he should go.---



THE advantages of a religious education, both to individuals and society, are so great and many, and at the same time so very obvious, that the general and increasing neglect of it is almost as much to be wondered at, as it is deplorable in its consequences. For, while daily improvements are made in all other arts and sciences, and the present times are undeniably better than the former in all natural advantages, is it not strange that a less regard should be paid by the generality, to what is acknowledged to be of the greatest importance to the interest and happiness of mankind? and that moral instruction, or the instilling into young and tender minds the great and necessary principles of religion and virtue, the wholesome maxims and interesting truths of Christianity should be not only too much neglected, but, to appearance, more so than ever?

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And,

And, as it is truly deplorable to observe this great and growing neglect of a religious education, so it cannot but add to the concern which every serious Christian must feel upon this account, that, where it doth take place, where sincere desires and endeavours are not wanting to this end, it is notwithstanding too often badly conducted, either unprofitably, or sometimes even to the real hurt and prejudice of youth. And from this source, *viz.* an injudicious method of instruction, we may reasonably suppose is derived much of that aversion to religion, which so early discovers itself in some, and that undue zeal in others, and blind attachment to certain abstruse points, which has created so much disturbance among Christians, sown those divisions and distractions, by which Christianity has greatly suffered and still continues to suffer, frustrated it of its true and genuine effects among its own professors, and retarded its farther progress by the offence which all uncharitable measures are apt to give to its enemies.

These reflections on the general neglect of, and the wrong manner in which, this important duty is performed, suggest the following as the most useful method of discoursing from the words of the text.

I. I shall particularly point out *what* it is proper for every parent to teach his child, And

II. Shew the *way* and *manner* in which this is to be done, with a direction or two respecting the *temper* and *actions* of children.

In the first place then, I am to specify those things in which it is proper for all parents to instruct their children. One would think

think indeed, considering in how plain a manner our duty is set forth, that there can be little danger of mistaking in this respect; that no parent who has a common capacity, and reads the scriptures can be ignorant of what he ought to teach his child. However, we find it otherwise in fact; and cannot but observe, that many are fond of instilling into the minds of their children not only such notions as can be of no use to them, being altogether vain and trifling, but also such wrong and inconsistent principles, as clash both with reason and scripture; and labour, besides, to teach them what they are not capable of learning, and what they themselves may not rightly understand, or, indeed, be able to understand.

From this observation the following *general* direction is inferred, *viz.* “ that the things proper to be made the employment of “ young minds are such only, as are suited to their capacities, obviously true, and of great moment and concern to them.” For, by striving to teach them what they *cannot understand*, you not only do them no good, and lose your labour, but you hurt and distress their tender minds, and create in them an aversion to your instructions. By instilling into them, with great zeal and earnestness, principles that are not *obviously true*, and which many good Christians themselves may have called in question, you know not assuredly, whether you are teaching them the truth or leading them astray, nay, whether you are not by this means fixing the byas of the mind for ever on the side of error and delusion: And, by engaging them in matters of *little or no moment*, you train them up, either to a low and despicable way of thinking upon religion, or else, make them zealots in things of indifference and less consequence, while they overlook the weightier matters of the law of God.

Agreeably

Agreeably therefore to the above *general* direction, "instruct your children in the knowledge of the one true God." In this you will find no difficulty. For the belief of a God is connatural with the mind of man. By this expression I do not mean to assert either that it is universal, or that it would naturally have suggested itself to the minds of the generality of mankind, without any supernatural information, (questions more curious than useful) but only, that we are made capable of the knowledge of God, capable of being taught this truth, "that He is;" and that it is no sooner proposed to the minds of men, than (such is their Nature) they readily yield their assent to it. If such Belief was not agreeable to the nature of man, the mind would neither be so susceptible nor so retentive of it, as we find it is; for, once admitted, it keeps its hold, being guarded both by reason and conscience; and a man must break through every natural restraint and get quit both of his reason and his conscience, before he can quit his belief, and persuade himself that there is no God. This truth therefore, as it is of the first importance, so is it plain and obvious, and will gain an easy admittance into the minds of your children, approving itself to their dawning reason and tender consciences.

But, here, the sacred scriptures, which give us the truest notions and clearest apprehensions of the divine nature, are to be consulted. Had we the light of pure, uncorrupted reason to guide us, and in a sufficient degree, this, no doubt, would enable us to conceive in the best and most perfect manner of God. But, as the light of reason is much dim'd in man and clouded with innumerable prejudices, and his irregular passions clogg and bear down the higher and more excellent powers of the understanding, he is often led into error and absurdity. This was
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more especially the case with the gentile world; who, as the Apostle himself acknowledgeth, were not entirely ignorant of the being of a God; but their notions of him were become altogether absurd, and their manner of worshipping him no better than blasphemous.

Let your instructions therefore, on this head, be drawn from the sacred scriptures, the fountain of truth, and be cautious of delivering any thing contrary to what is contained therein. They inform you, “that there is but one God, one first cause and
“original of all things; and to whom all other beings are inferior and in subjection: That, as He is the most powerful, so He
“is the best and wisest of all beings: That He governs the world
“by his providence, being present to all and in all places, having
“a perfect knowledge of things and actions, and discerning
“the inmost thoughts and most secret purposes of the heart:
“That He is a being of spotless purity, perfectly holy, and interested
“himself on the side of religion and virtue, rewarding the good and obedient,
“and punishing the wicked and disobedient, in mercy nevertheless plenteous, and ever ready to forgive
“and accept sincere penitents: And that the same is unchangeable
“in these perfections of his nature.”

After having suggested these first principles of religion, and impressed them on the minds of your children, which you will find very easy to be done; because they are most plain, and what the human mind is by nature framed to receive, it will next be proper to introduce them to the knowledge of a Saviour by a plain account of the nature, situation and circumstances of man, as a moral and religious being, and of those various dispensations of providence, and signal communications of divine grace, which

it pleased his maker at different periods, according to the exigencies of his state, to vouchsafe unto him. For this purpose, it would be highly proper to give them some such short and easy view of the matter as follows, and which is contained in the old Testament,

“That God, at first, made man upright and placed him in a state of dependance upon his favour, by enjoining him laws, the breach of which was threatned with death *,” that is, the deprivation of that life and being which he had so lately received: “That man disobeyed his maker, and, in consequence of it, death passed upon him; and his posterity became heirs to mortality †.” Here, it cannot be amiss just to caution you against suggesting any thing on this head which is merely controversial, which you know has been doubted by very wise and good men, and of which, at least, it requires the judgment of riper years to discern the truth or falshood.

“That after the first transgression, when men began to multiply on the face of the earth, their wickedness increased greatly, and in less than 2000 years became so universal, that the divine being, as the moral governor of the world, determined to destroy man, whom he had created, from the earth, by a deluge of Water, *Noah* and his family only of all the human race remaining alive ‡.” Thus did sin and disobedience to the divine commands end in the destruction of the old world; a proper period this in the history of mankind for pausing a little, in order to give the mind time to digest the narrative, and to throw in such easy reflections upon it, as may tend to evince the

* Gen. I. 27. — II. 16. 17. † Gen. III. 6. — III. 19. ‡ 1 Cor. XV. 21. 22.

† Gen. VI. VII. VIII.

deadly nature of sin, and illustrate at once the divine forbearance towards offending creatures, and the justice and equity of the punishment which their impenitency at last brought upon them.

“ That it pleased God, however, after the waters were asswaged, to reward the singular piety of *Noah* by assuring him of his gracious intentions to him and mankind in general, and to all living creatures upon the earth, to the latest generations; and entering into a covenant with him that there should never more be a flood to destroy the earth *.” And thus we see, that, as the transgression of the divine law by our first parents derived a numerous train of evils upon all, so the righteousness and piety of *Noah* hath derived a great blessing upon the world, in that through him we are assured, that the ground shall not be cursed any more for man’s sake, and that, while the earth remaineth, there shall be no interruption of the grateful and beneficial vicissitude of, seed-time and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night.

Under this gracious covenant, however, as men began to multiply on the earth, and the impressions, which the judgment of God upon the old world, and his mercies to the new, had made upon their minds, wore off, sin began to shew itself again; the subtle enemy and deceiver of mankind had again sown the seeds of rebellion in the hearts of the sons of man, and was now meditating their universal revolt from their creator, when divine providence interposed to baffle his dark designs, and, by preventing a total apostacy of the human race, to prevent their universal ruin. “ That to this end God called *Abraham* out of his native country, and separated him from his kindred, and from his father’s house,

* Gen. IX. 15.

“to make of him a numerous people, who should be worshippers
 “of the one living and true God, and thus be instrumental in pre-
 “serving in the world, though surrounded by idolatrous nations,
 “the knowledge of God, and in conveying the same, in the fulness
 “of time, to the whole gentile world: That the covenant which
 “was established with *Abraham* and renewed unto *Isaac* and *Ja-
 “cob* was to this effect, *viz.* 1. That his seed should be exceeding
 “numerous; 2. That it should inherit the land of *Canaan* for an
 “everlasting possession; and 3. That in it all the nations of the
 “earth should be blessed*.

“That God had remarkably fulfilled the two first promises
 “contained in this covenant, which were confined to his own
 “house and posterity, in that he had multiplied him greatly, and
 “conducted and settled his posterity, who increased as the stars
 “of heaven in multitude, in the promised country†;” But that
 “the last and most extensive promise, *viz.* “of all the nations of
 “the earth being blessed, began not to be fulfilled till the com-
 “ing of *Christ Jesus*, in whom both the *Jews* and the *Gentiles*,
 “even the whole world, was to be blessed and made happy, by
 “the publication of the Gospel, which has brought the joyful ti-
 “dings of everlasting life and salvation‡.”

The account of this person, who he was, what he did,
 taught and suffered, it will be proper for you carefully and judi-
 ciously to extract from the four evangelists, that you may be en-
 abled to put the parts of the narration in such order, that they
 may appear obvious and natural, and at the same time engage
 their attention. The essential parts, you know, are as follows;
 “That He was the son of God, sent from heaven to instruct

* Gen. XII. 1. 2. 3.—XV. 5.—XVI. 4. 5. 6. 7. 8.—XXII. 17. 18.—XXVI. 3. 4.
 —XVIII. 3. 4. † Joh. XII. et seq.—XXII. 43. 44. 45. ‡ Luk. I. 72. 73.

“ mankind

“ mankind in their duty, and those things which relate to their
 “ everlasting happiness ; that he came as the promised *Messiah*
 “ to the *Jews*, in particular ; and as the person also in whom
 “ the world, in general, should be blessed ; that he proved his
 “ divine mission and office, both from the ancient scriptures, and
 “ also by many and diverse miracles which he wrought in the
 “ most public and open manner, instantaneously healing all man-
 “ ner of diseases, casting out devils, and raising the dead to
 “ life again : that after a life of spotless purity, piety, and
 “ the most extensive benevolence, he suffered death upon the
 “ cross, as was prophesied of him, and as he prophesied of him-
 “ self : that he was buried and continued in the grave, in a state
 “ of death, to the third day, on which he rose again from the
 “ dead, shewed himself to his disciples, and having given them a
 “ commission to go and teach all nations, (to go into all the
 “ world, and preach the gospel to every creature,) he was re-
 “ ceived up into heaven : that from thence he will come to judge
 “ the world, both the quick and the dead (for the dead shall be
 “ raised ;) and that he will render to every one according to the
 “ deeds done in the body whether they be good or whether they
 “ be evil.”

This is a sketch of those great truths which are delivered to us
 in the word of God, which every Christian professeth to believe,
 and in which he is bound to instruct his children.

But as the knowledge of the truth will not profit without a cor-
 respondent practice, and faith without works is dead ; so you are
 to teach your children, what they are to do as well as what they
 are to believe. Now the sum of all this is contained in that saying
 of our Saviour, *viz.* “ Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all

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“ thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind ; and
 “ thy neighbour as thyself.” On these two commandments hang
 all those laws to which God has enjoined obedience, in whatever
 terms they may be expressed or specified in the law and prophets.
 “ That for this, they are not to worship idols, nor to take the
 “ name of the Lord in vain, nor to dishonour their father and
 “ mother, nor to do any murder, nor to steal, nor to covet their
 “ neighbour’s goods, &c.” : And moreover, “ that they are to
 “ keep the commandments, not merely according to the letter, but
 “ according to the judgment of their hearts and consciences ;”
 thus for instance, though in the law it be only said, thou shalt do
 no murder, as if the outward act alone, of illegally taking away
 the life of one’s fellow creature, was forbid, yet “ that the law of
 “ universal love to man requires it of them, that they be not so
 “ much as angry with their brother without a cause, nor harbour
 “ in their breasts any rancorous disposition against him, which is a
 “ real transgression, an actual breach of the divine law : that they
 “ are not only to abstain from theft, strictly interpreted, but also
 “ from injuring another in any respect, whether it be by taking
 “ away his property, blasting his reputation, or by any design and
 “ contrivance against him whatsoever.” In like manner with re-
 gard to the duty they owe to God, “ that they are not only to pay
 “ religious worship to him alone, and refuse to bow down to idols,
 “ but also to be cautious of dishonouring him by any irreverent
 “ expressions among men, by shewing any contempt and disre-
 “ gard of his authority or injunctions, by scoffing at religion, or
 “ bringing any ill report upon the way of truth and piety, all
 “ which is utterly inconsistent with a fervent love to God.” In
 short, “ that this commandment of love to God and man in-
 “ cludes

“ cludes in it a regular discharge of those duties and offices, how
 “ ever various and manifold, to which they may be called by the
 “ differing circumstances, situations and events of life ;” to all
 which you may add, “ that the reward of this obedience is, ge-
 “ rally speaking, length of days, increase of substance, a good
 “ name and peace of mind in this present world, and, in the next,
 “ eternal life through our Lord Jesus Christ.”

Thus I have shewn you what you are to teach your children in a brief summary of our religion, as contained in the scriptures of the old and new testament: In this summary you will not find any thing that is so much as doubted by those who profess to believe the scriptures. These truths and principles you will acknowledge to be of the utmost importance ; and they are, besides, very plain and obvious, or may be rendered so by your leisure instructions, where the brevity I have been obliged to consult in laying them before you may have occasioned some obscurity.

II. Let us now consider, in the second place, the way and manner in which religious instruction should be conveyed to the minds of children. And one very obvious direction that occurs on this head is, that you instruct them gradually, beginning with the plainest things, and not being eager to have your child appear uncommonly forward in having learnt many things soon. This is an error, which in other arts we observe the best masters carefully guard against, well knowing, that this would be the ready way to lead their pupils to a slight and superficial knowledge only of what they are learning, and cause them to contract awkward and bad habits in all they do. It is just the same (but the consequences of error here are the more fatal, as the subject is of so much greater importance) in administering religious instruction to young and unformed minds. By proceeding irregularly, and not observing an easy progress

gress in your method of teaching, instead of communicating the more knowledge, you but perplex and bewilder their understandings, and train them to an hasty and vague way of thinking ; by crowding fresh objects too fast upon them, you make them hurry from the first and plainest principles before they have become familiar, and rooted themselves in the heart as well as in the understanding. And having lost their first principles, they must needs wander, their life after in a maze of error and uncertainty. The mind is necessarily led into a wrong train of thinking and reasoning, becomes odd and fanciful in its notions, and if, in this situation, it should escape the one extreme, of enthusiasm, superstition and bigotry, it must fall into the other extreme, and fluctuate for ever on the unbounded ocean of scepticism and infidelity. But, though I have delivered the summary of religion in historical order to *you*, yet let me just observe, that this may not be the properest order in which you are to suggest it to your *children*. This must be left to your own judgment. You must be ever observing their reach of capacity, and the progress they make, and considering what is most natural to be communicated under the differing circumstances of this kind.

In the next place; as you will find it of great advantage to deliver your instructions by degrees, neither over hastily, nor in a confused and unconnected manner, so you can hardly communicate any thing of this nature to your children in too familiar and condescending a manner. In this, indeed, the art of religious education chiefly consists. For, whatever you would teach them, it is most natural to think, they will make the greatest proficiency in those things, in which they take pleasure and delight. But this they cannot do, so long as they are taught to look upon what they learn
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concerning God and their duty as a sort of task from you. This must give them a real disgust at religion, and make them unconcerned to understand any thing more of the matter than what will enable them to satisfy your severity; which accounts, in a great measure, for that which we every day observe, *viz.* that most children are fonder of being employed in any thing than what relates to religion. This preference cannot be from nature. For we find the human mind is capable of being impressed with nothing so much or so easily, as with a sense of religion. But it is, because parents will treat with their children about most other matters familiarly, with an air of freedom, friendliness, and such an easy condescension, as is most engaging and winning upon their ingenuous and docile tempers, while they are but too apt, on the subject of religion, to assume a kind of severity and affect an uncommon distance.

And, under this head, I beg I may be allowed to pass a reflection upon the merely formal manner, in which this useful employment of instructing youth in the principles of religion, is so generally conducted. Many parents think they have done enough and discharged this duty, if they have not neglected, at stated times, to employ their children in reading or hearing the word of God, in answering repeatedly out of the same catechism, questions, in all likelihood, far above their capacities, and learning a form or two of devotion.—But this comes far short of the duty in its full extent; and if you content yourselves with this, it is plain you have not your heart and affections engaged in the work. The real improvement of your children in useful knowledge and true goodness and piety seems not to be your great care and concern: But it is only out of custom, or perhaps, for order's sake and your own con-

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veniency,

venience, that you insist upon these trite exercises from them. Whereas, a sincere desire of their improvement and an affectionate concern for their best, their spiritual interests, would lead you to take every opportunity and occasion that offers of instructing them, of conveying to them some important truth or wholesome maxim, of explaining to them what they read or hear, of trying their capacities and examining into the progress they make, or lastly, of resolving their doubts, removing any difficulties which may occur to them, and satisfying their inquisitiveness after the truth. For by treating them in this familiar, easy, and affectionate manner, you will observe in them an encreasing fondness for being instructed by you ; and that they will be readier to learn, and are capable of taking in knowledge faster than you can suggest it to them. Because the mind is naturally formed for the perception of truth ; and there is hardly any capacity so dull and weak as not to receive it, when it is administered suitably, and as it ought to be.

But in the last place, besides instilling into the minds of your children the great truths and principles of the christian religion in the best and most proper manner, you are to take especial care of their tempers and behaviour. You consult indeed for this greatly, while you neglect not to cultivate their understandings and furnish them with religious knowledge ; as this is to have an influence upon their hearts, and to regulate their conduct. But knowledge alone, not even in the noblest attainments thereof, can be sufficient for rectitude of manners without a proper culture of the dispositions of the mind.

For this purpose therefore you must attentively consider the natural bent and inclination of your children. For we find that nature, or the God of nature, to serve the purposes of his providence and the more extensive benefit of society, has made an original difference

ference in the constitutions of men ; having given to each mind its particular bent or propensity. Hence it is that we observe one thirst after knowledge, and for this willingly forego every other advantage : while another neglects this, to find his happiness in the more active scenes of life. Some we observe naturally serious, others as remarkably alert and sprightly in their natural tempers. And this difference we are not to look upon as undesigned and by chance, but as a wise contrivance in the moral frame of man : nor are we to judge any particular cast of the mind to be, originally and in itself, wrong or worse than another, but to judge of the natural temper of every man, as we do of the parts of the body, *viz.* that, as each of these is necessary to the whole, and not wrong in itself, and from the first, but only as it comes to be hurt, or deformed afterwards, so the different tempers and propensities of men are each designed to promote the benefit of society, and are not wrong in themselves, from the first, but only as they come to be perverted, directed to wrong ends, or placed upon wrong objects.

It therefore highly concerns parents to understand well the natural propensities and leading desires of their children, that they may manage them artfully, breaking them insensibly to that course of action, and accustoming them to those objects, which are worthy the pursuit of rational and intelligent beings. By such an intimate acquaintance with their moral frame, you have a great advantage over them, and may be able to lead them on to their duty without those harsh measures which might tend only to break their spirits, sour their tempers, and, by making them despair of ever pleasing you and gaining your favour and approbation, drive them on their final ruin.

But notwithstanding your best endeavours to know and regulate their natural dispositions, it must be expected, that some bad habits

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It therefore highly concerns parents to understand well the natural propensities and leading desires of their children, that they may manage them artfully, breaking them insensibly to that course of action, and accustoming them to those objects, which are worthy the pursuit of rational and intelligent beings. By such an intimate acquaintance with their moral frame, you have a great advantage over them, and may be able to lead them on to their duty without those harsh measures which might tend only to break their spirits, sour their tempers, and, by making them despair of ever pleasing you and gaining your favour and approbation, drive them on their final ruin.

But notwithstanding your best endeavours to know and regulate their natural dispositions, it must be expected, that some bad habits

habits will be contracted, at least, that the variety of temptations to which they are exposed, will subject them to several imprudencies and irregularities of behaviour. These require your constant attention and vigilance to prevent for the future. And this is to be done, not by resolving to punish them for every offence; for in this way you may only provoke them to wrath and obstinacy, make them callous in time to all correction, and lessen their regard of your authority; but it may be done by gentle admonitions, affectionate reproofs, or even by merely convincing them of their faults, and making it evidently appear to themselves and their own judgment, that they are in the wrong. This itself will sometimes be sufficient to restrain them from the like practices; so ingenuous is the natural temper of some children. At other times, frequently indeed, it will be necessary to represent to them the folly of what they have done, and what you suspect them inclined to repeat; and to convince them, that the fault which they are tempted through a prospect of some pleasure or profit to commit, cannot possibly answer their end, but must necessarily issue in their hurt and disadvantage in one respect or other; in bringing shame and disgrace upon them, in filling them with uneasy and uncomfortable reflections upon a conviction and sense of their bad behaviour, or in rendering them less beloved by their friends and acquaintance, and less deserving of your favourable and kind regards.

And let me add to this, that you should sometimes even pass by and take no notice to them of certain faults, but endeavour to correct them (where it can be done) insensibly, and without so much as their suspecting that they were observed by you. A great many of their follies and faulty actions need not so much your direct blame and censure, much less your severity, as your careful attention to and strict observance of them, that you may come at the
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cause itself, learn from what source they are derived, and mark what wrong dispositions and temper they indicate. To be short, "in training up your children to virtue and religion, apply your chief care and endeavours to the rectifying the temper itself. This is the main point. For if your aim be only directed upon preventing their wrong actions, you may chastise them endlessly for these, and find all your pains and labour to prevent them ineffectual at the last, because the principle or temper from whence they proceed remains neglected and unrectified."

Thus have I endeavoured, in the plainest manner I am able, to point out to you *what things* it is proper for you to teach your children, and shewn you in what *way* and *manner* they should be suggested to them, together with a remark or two on the proper observance of their actions, and management of their tempers. I have been very plain as well as minute upon the subject. But this, I think, needs no apology. For to what purpose is it to harangue upon the necessity and importance of a religious education, or to complain in general terms of the many deficiencies of it, and the wrong methods that are too often pursued in training up young minds to piety and virtue, without either instancing and shewing what these deficiencies and wrong methods are, or, at least, pointing out a way by which the one may be supplied and the other rectified.

And I have purposely chosen to employ the time allotted me, in suggesting a few proper and necessary hints concerning the *method* of performing this duty, rather than exhorting you to the *practice* of it; because, I believe, more are willing to *do* it than understand *how* it may be done in the best manner; I have not time, therefore, now to expatiate upon the many and strong obligations you lie under to the discharge of this duty, nor upon the advantages accru-

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ing from it, both to your children in their present as well as everlasting happiness, to yourselves in the comforts of filial obedience, and to society in general, the welfare and happiness of which do so evidently depend upon the virtue and piety of the members thereof.

Let me, however, conjure you (and sum up all in this) to practise this duty in faithfulness and sincerity, as you will answer it at the last day of accounts. For you must be answerable, not only for your own behaviour, but also for the behaviour of your children, so far as that shall have depended upon your example or instruction. May God grant that you may then give in your accounts with joy and not with grief, and be made happy and rejoice together through eternity.

But I cannot conclude without addressing myself in few words to the younger part of my audience, with whose attendance, through your influence and paternal authority, I am this day favoured, and for whose benefit the above directions to you are intended.

My dear friends,

How amiable and pleasant is religion, and how profitable are the counsels of wisdom! The lesson you have to learn from your parents and religious instructors, is easy and delightful, as well as highly beneficial. They are to teach you the knowledge of God; who He is, what He has done for you, and what He would have you do, that you may be happy. Now in doing this, they introduce you, as it were, to your best friend; to Him, that made you, preserves you, and gives you every good thing you enjoy; who is ever present with you, guides you by his good providence through the dangers and temptations of the day, and watcheth for you in the night-season, when your senses are locked up, and you can take no thought for yourselves.

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Such instruction as this, as it is extremely easy, what you are capable of understanding, as much as I that speak to you of it, so it must needs be delightful to the mind. What pleasure may it yield you, to know and consider, that besides the kind affections and assistance of your earthly parents, friends and relatives, you have an invisible protection and a tender concern exercised for you by your Father and Friend in heaven ! And if you receive these principles of education with cheerfulness from your instructors, and find them also agreeable and comfortable upon reflection, you will be blessed in their genuine effects upon your own tempers, and they will make you a blessing and comfort to others, but particularly a comfort, credit and a crown of glory to your aged parents, when every other comfort begins to leave them, and all their own honours, of beauty, strength, splendor, knowledge, or renown, yield to time and are tarnished with the infirmities of nature. Having had an early acquaintance with God, and being taught to conceive well and worthily of Him, as a good being and your most able friend, you will naturally love Him, and endeavour to secure His favour by striving always to do those things which are pleasing to Him, and avoiding whatsoever you know must offend Him.— Thus you will live virtuously ; thus you will live honourably ; thus you will live happily, And seek not, (let me caution you) honour and happiness but in the path of duty and the service of your maker. For were it possible to find them in the by-paths of sin and the service of satan, yet such honour and such happiness can last only the term of your present life, nay, only while your health and the vigour of your constitutions, which decay the faster for sin, continue. All, afterwards, is sorrow and sore distress. But chuse God and religion for your portion now and through your better days, and you will experience the comfort and wisdom of
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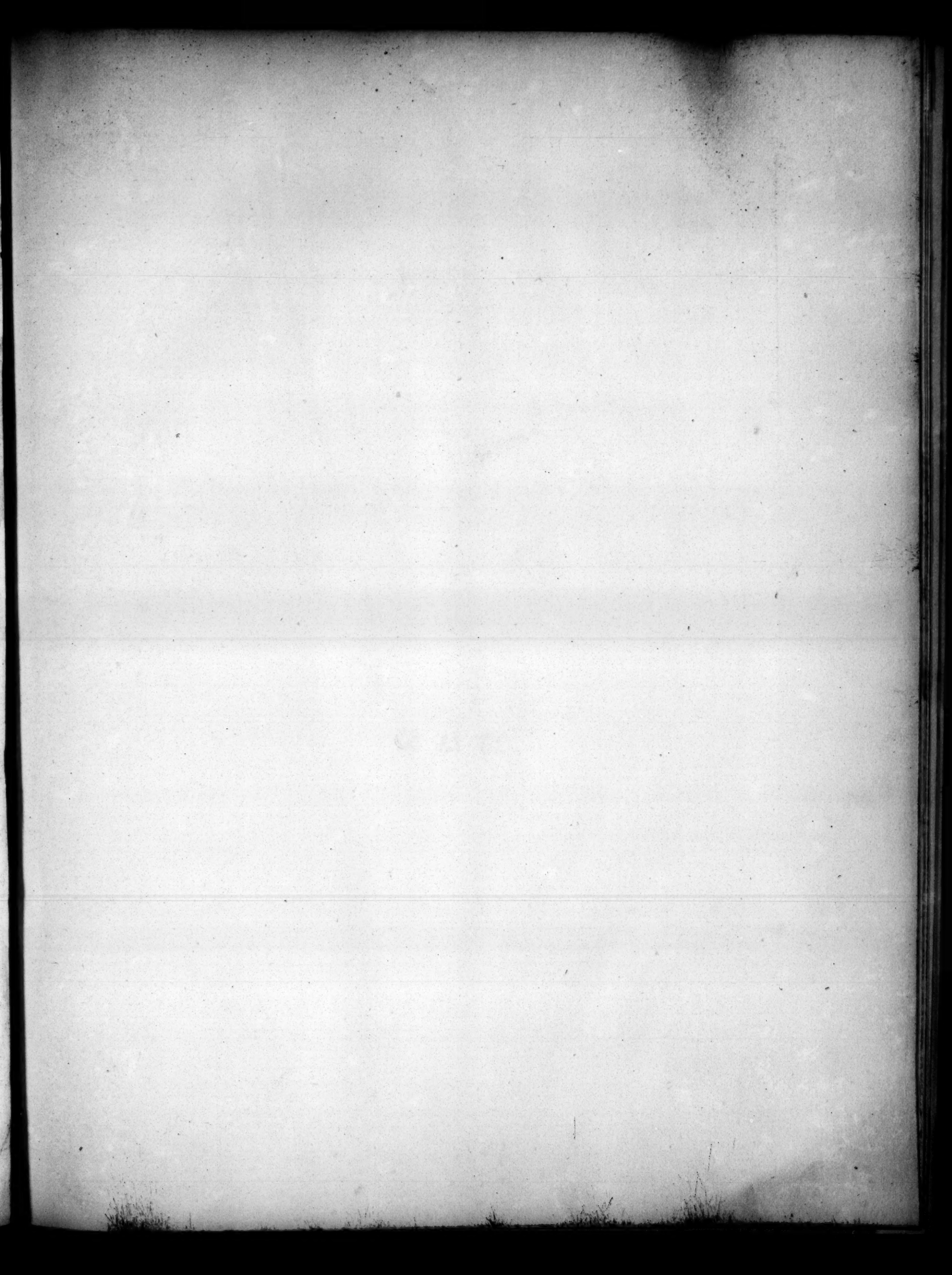
such a choice, more especially, when they are past, and those evil days draw near, in which the sinner saith, I have no pleasure. But your heart will then be fixed, trusting in the Lord, that, as He has been the guide of your youth, so He will be the support of your age, and your portion for ever.

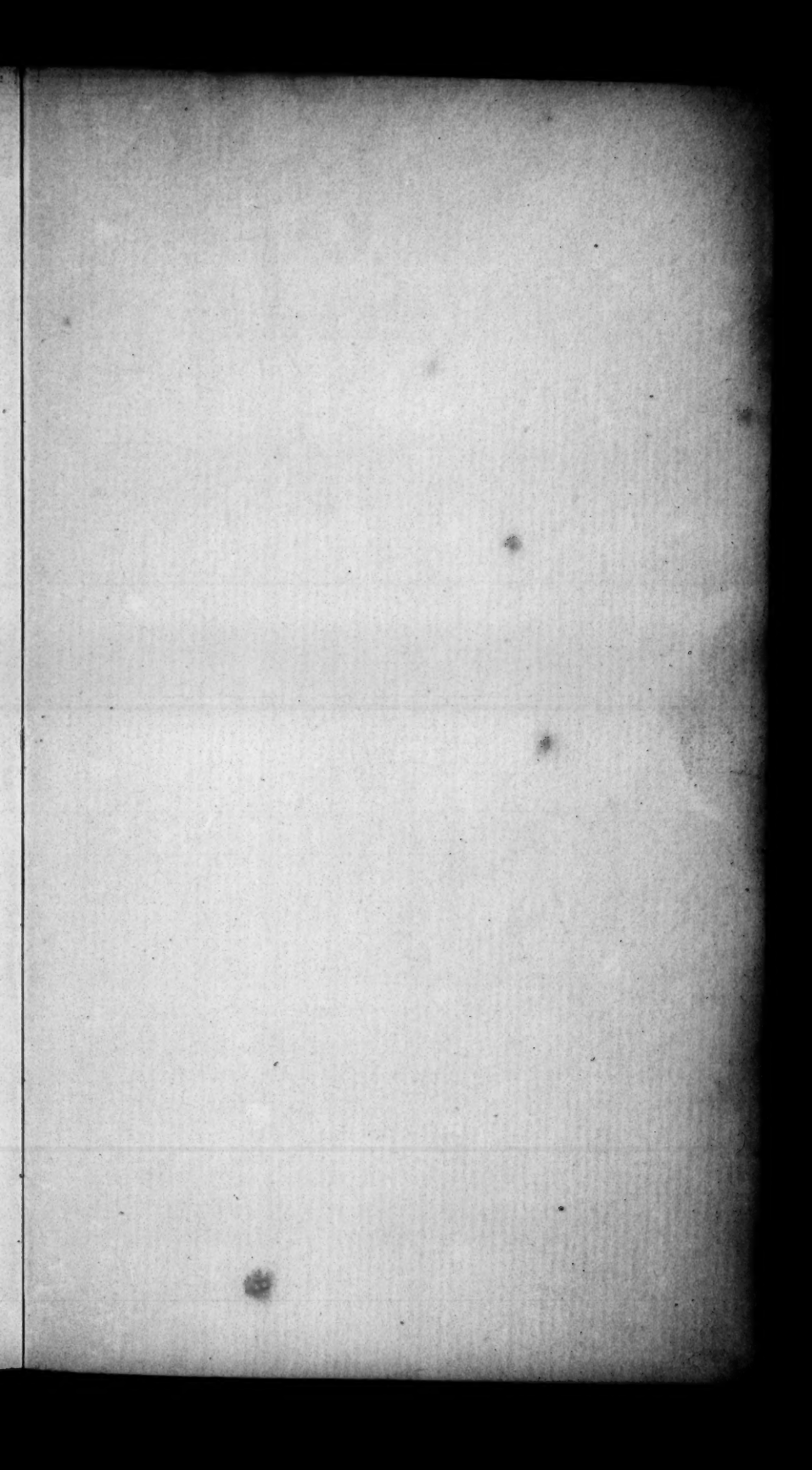
“Hear therefore, little children, the instruction of your fathers,
“and forsake not the law of your mothers. For they shall be an
“ornament of grace to your heads and chains about your neck.”
“Whoso hearkeneth unto their counsel dwelleth safely, and shall
“be quiet from the fear of evil.”

To these kind admonitions of the wise man, I shall just add and conclude with the affectionate exhortation, or rather charge of the apostle, “Children, obey your parents in the Lord; for
“this is right. Honour thy father and thy mother, which is the
“first commandment with promise; that it may be well with
“thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth. And ye, fathers;
“provoke not your children to wrath; but bring them up in the
“nurture and admonition of the Lord.”

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